

# THE BULLETIN

## THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DECATUR COUNTY

Vol. 7 No. 17

2002  
January 2001

Greensburg, Indiana

### Annual Meeting

6 P.M. FEBRUARY 16, 2002 AT

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

PROGRAM: JOHN PRATT, LOCAL COLLECTOR

PORK TENDERLOIN AND DRESSING DINNER

FOR RESERVATIONS SEND \$7.50 TO

P.O. BOX 163, GREENSBURG, IN 47240

### Underground Railroad Subject for Program

Diane Coon of Louisville, Ky. gave an outstanding program at the Greensburg library Nov. 13 about Decatur County's role in the Underground Railroad.

Diane graduated from Cornell University and did post-graduate work in English at the University of Louisville before moving to the East Coast. She completed her M.B.A. at Rider College in New Jersey during her 23 year career with Western Electric-AT&T-Lucent Technologies.

When she retired, Diane entered the master's program at the University of Louisville and completed her degree in December. She has concentrated on early American History and is currently researching and writing about the history of the Ohio River Valley.

Her largest project to date has been identification and documentation of the Underground Railroad sites and operations in the 10 county Southeastern Indiana and 11 county North Central Kentucky regions.

Diane is in great demand as a speaker. In October she spoke to a Conference of the American Baptist Church and has spoken at various conferences, History Days, Historical Societies, Preservation Committees, and Civil War Roundtables.

The standing-room-only crowd included Rene' McClintic's Scouts. It was great having them there. We would love to see more children attend programs during the year.

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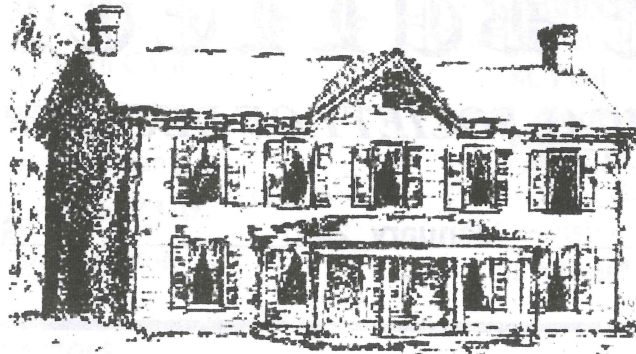
Watch For Spring Exhibit at the Museum

*"APRON STRINGS TIED TO THE PAST"*

*see page 3 for items you may have to loan for the exhibit.*



## Museum News



by  
**Diana Springmier**  
**Museum and**  
**Collections Director**

drwing by John Bedel

The Museum's Christmas Open House was hosted and enjoyed by all generations of Decatur County's families.

The downstairs rooms were aglow with the holiday spirit on a sunny mild early December Sunday afternoon. Greensburg music instructor Nick Parcell's sixth grade instrumental students and their parents and siblings gathered to hear the Christmas melodies the young musicians shared with many in the North Parlor. In fact, children were everywhere. St. Mary's Little Hoosiers, a junior historical society, were quite helpful manning the guest register, hanging up guest's coats, serving punch and carrying dishes, emptied of Gladys Pike's mouth-watering bread pudding with warm butter sauce, to the back kitchen. The children, sharing their Sunday afternoon with many, were Donna Stewart's sixth grade students, Alex Bice, Aaron Hoeing, Taryn Owens, Clare Pratt, Jeremy Sherman and Sara Stier.

Also in the North Parlor with its 1920s Christmas village, red and green Victorian hanging tree lanterns tucked in the mantle greenery, and Helen Hamilton's antique and modern ornament collection was the 2001 Historical Society Christmas ornament, the Big Four Rail Station, circa 1909 which many families purchased to be displayed on their trees at their homes. Mentioning trees, this year's parlor tree was the "perfect" tree, donated and put in place by Ruth and Roger Cash. Ruth had also been busily decorating the rest of the museum with Helen, Carol Pumphrey and Ginny Garvey, display chair. Russell Wilhoit hung the Williamsburg wreaths above the parlor's outside windows and the large wreath of fresh red apples on the door.

The Smiley sisters, children of Gordon and Beth, held spellbound those in attendance with their musical selections. Olivia, a violinist, and sister Sabrina, a cellist, entertained, among others, Grandfather Bill and aunts, Polly McCreary and Liz Reed. Emma Springmier sang carols accompanied by Willadene Wood who was on call all afternoon for children who wished piano background music. Grandparents Don and Margaret Herbert came to hear Emma. Stan Saler's trumpet kept us in the spirit as well as a couple of talented North Decatur Elementary students, pianist Amanda Williams, and vocalist, Meredith Tarplee. An unexpected entertainer was Jefferson Pike, who after a total of ten piano lessons, accompanying his grandparents, Gladys and Bill, just happened to have his music at hand and, thus, volunteered to play for those in attendance. Elizabeth Smart, a young pianist, also was at the piano.

Entering the dining room, sparkling with hollowware on the mantle and sideboards, one viewed in the corner a tree decorated with silver antique spoons. The table, centered with a feather tree, was laden with silver trays piled with Christmas treats to accompany the cranberry punch and Gladys' gift to the museum, her bread pudding. Society members baking for the

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event were Juanita Beall, Nancy Cuskaden, Sara Foster, Margaret Herbert, Polly McCreary, Laura Owens, Mary Stradley, Diana Springmier and Nancy Wilhoit.

With close to 200 visitors at the museum on that memorable Sunday, 222 North Franklin Street came to life, returning briefly to an earlier Christmas, felt throughout the rooms of the museum and the grounds, by the guests who slowed down during the busy bustle of the holiday season to reflect.

January through March the museum is closed. It will be open for the county's fourth grade students in April, and the spring exhibit, "Apron Strings Tied to the Past." If members have late 19th Century or early 20th Century kitchen utensils or aprons to loan for the exhibit, call Ginny Garvey at 663-2132.

The museum committee hopes to see you in the spring after winter's cold makes way for the 2002 season on North Franklin.

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## **NOT SO LONG A GO**

### **The top nine news stories of 1951 were:**

1. The firing of General Douglas MacArthur by President Harry Truman
2. The Korean War
3. The scandals in the United States government
4. The Kefauver crime committee hearings
5. The return of Winston Churchill to power
6. The atomic weapon tests in the United States and Soviet Union
7. The rebellion against colonel rule in Iran and Egypt
8. Sports Scandals
9. The floods in the Midwest

### **Notice**

We will close The Palms Drug Store Wednesday, December 5, 1951 and will move it to our newly rebuilt west side drug store. Open Saturday, December 8.

### **NOTICE**

Ladies of the Presbyterian Church announce that Thursday, December 6, 1951 is the start of the **Annual Bazaar** featuring

Art Booth  
Gift Booth  
Kitchen Booth  
Rag Rug and Pillow Booth

Wishing Well  
Noon and Evening Meal

### **Ruth's Gifts (December 1951)**

We have gold banded plates or ash trays for sale with lithographed imprint of Greensburg's famous Tower Tree. These were made especially for us by Judy Kirk Ceramics

The Plate is standard size with the lithograph in color for #2.75

The ash tray is 4 inches by 3 inches for \$1.25





# DECATUR COUNTY POLITICS IN 1860

by Dr. Calvin D. Davis



The files of the Greensburg Standard for the Civil War period were lost long ago, but there are a few excerpts from those files preserved in a column usually called "Interesting Items" in the Standard for 1907-1910, and we do have files and microfilms of that newspaper for those years. Editors of the paper in 1910 were much aware that fifty years had passed since the election of Abraham Lincoln and they frequently chose items which told of Decatur County politics in 1860. They are invaluable for the study of the county's Civil War history.

On September 2, 1910 the Standard published an excerpt from an issue of March 1860 which tells of the organization of the Republican party on the local level and it mentions several people who would be important political leaders for many years. I. G. Grover, elected to the state legislature in 1860, would serve as a colonel in the Seventh Indiana Infantry Regiment during the Civil War and be promoted to brevet brigadier general near the close of his service. Orville and Origen Thomson were sons of John and Spicey Hamilton Thomson. Their father was the founder of the first Greensburg newspaper, the Repository, in 1835. Their mother was a member of the Hamilton family of Kingston. Both Origen and Orville would have distinguished careers as writers. Orville would edit the Standard and run his own printing shop. He would serve as an officer in the Seventh Indiana Infantry and write the history of that regiment. Will Cumback was the county's best known Republican; his fellow citizens would often hear from him as the great crisis of 1860 developed.

On September 23, 1910 the Standard again published 1860 political items. One tells more of Cumback's activities and it makes clear the regional influence of the Greensburg lawyer, but the Standard gave greater emphasis to the Democratic county convention of May 26, 1860, and it mentions several prominent Democrats. Barton W. Wilson, who presided, was an outstanding lawyer. According to "Bench and Bar in Decatur County" by Orville Thomson and J. K. Ewing in the 1882 J. H. Beers Atlas of Decatur County, he was "a rock-ribbed Democrat, but never an office-seeker." The excerpt mentions other lawyers, among them, James Gavin and Oscar B. Hord. For a time they were partners and published a much-used collection of statutes. Gavin would attain the rank of colonel in the Seventh Indiana Infantry. Hord would become Indiana attorney-general during the Civil War and later a law partner of Thomas A. Hendricks. W. W. Lowe owned the St. Paul stone quarry. Thomas DeArmond was involved in a number of business ventures and eventually became a grocer in Sardinia. His sister Mary married Putnam Ewing, one of the Ewing triplets two days before the Greensburg meeting, thus establishing special ties between two families noted for their Democratic party politics. Thomas was the grandfather of Minnie DeArmond Davis, my grandmother. The county convention's endorsement of the Indiana delegation's course at the recent Democratic National Convention in Charleston (April 23 to May 3) is of particular importance. Local Democrats, like most Indiana Democrats, joined other Northern Democrats in firm opposition to the South's demand for removal of all barriers to the admission of slavery into any territory. The statement that General J. B. Foley and J. V. Bemusdaffer were present is of especial interest, for it is not clear whether they were at the

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Charleston convention or only present at the Greensburg meeting. Foley, a militia general, was a former congressman. Bemusdaffer, a native of Vermont, had served in the Army from Indiana during the Mexican War and had been sheriff of Decatur County. He would be a captain in the Seventh Infantry during its "100-day" period.

Readers who will read these excerpts (printed below) closely may be able to identify other names which appear in them:

**Greensburg Standard, September 2, 1910**

**1860**

A Young Men's Republican Club was organized March 19 in Temperance Hall. Chris Shane moved that I. G. Grover be temporary president. Orville Thomson named G. W. Rhiver for secretary. Origen Thomson, G. W. River and Chris Shane were appointed to present plans for organization. The following permanent officers were elected: Pres., I. G. Grover; vice president, Origin Thomson; secretary, G. W. Rhiver; corresponding secretary, M. Meredith; treasurer, Curtis Shane. All males under thirty five were eligible to membership. Hon. Will Cumback addressed the club at its first meeting after organization.

**The Greensburg Standard Sept. 23, 1910**

**from 1860**

Married: May 24, Putnam Ewing and Mary A. DeArmond, by Rev. D. R. Van Buskirk.

The Democrats held a county convention here May 26. Justice M. Cure was county chairman and Barton W. Wilson presided. James Gavin and W. W.

Lowe were active in the proceedings. Thomas DeArmond defeated Noah Mendenhall and William Eubanks for treasurer on first round. M. W. Allen, corner, A.A. Armington, surveyor, and David Munos for commissioner, had no opposition. W. T. Jackson was successful for sheriff on fifth ballot, defeating F. M. Weadon, J. Magee, John Swails, J. B. Back, J. Dugan and J. H. Hockenberry. Sheriff Wall was named for representative and A. L. Underwood for senator by acclamation. Oscar B. Hord made a hurrah speech at the close. Also, Jeff English and James Gavin. The convention endorsed the course of the Indiana delegation at the Charleston convention. Gen. J. B. Foley and J. V. Bemusdaffer were among those present. The report covers three columns, and is written up in spicy fashion.

Hon. Will Cumback, at the close of the Chicago convention, took a tour through Minnesota and made several speeches, a notable one at St. Paul, which was reported in full in the papers there. Gov. Gorman (Dem.) of that state, is quoted as saying of Cumback: "That speech is killing us – killing us! They are stealing our thunder!" Gov. Gorman was a former Indianian and was colonel of the Fourth Indiana regiment in the Mexican War.

## More news from 1860

The new jail is progressing nicely, and from the number of burglaries that have been attempted and committed in the city lately, we think the prospects for filling it as soon as finished are pretty fair. (The jail being built was the one that was on W. Main Street.)

Resolutions upon the death of Col. Joseph B. Hendrick, Worshipful Master of Milford Masonic Lodge, who died May 25, are prepared by I. W. Fugit, J. O. King and Henry Knight and published.

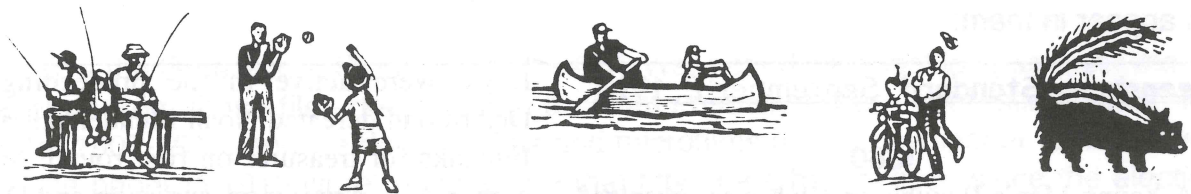
Big emigration to Pike's Peak is noted; 338 wagons and 962 men cross the river at Omaha the second week in May.

R. C. Talbott, county clerk, gives notice of the convening of the spring term of court on June 12, and sets out the cases on the docket. There were three cases for selling liquor without a license against Fred Scroder, Charles Metcalf and Conrad Ruhl, ten divorce cases, three for larceny and eighteen civil actions.

The two biggest advertising firms are John F. Stevens general store on the east side (of the square), and E. & L. P. Lathrop.



## Hendrick s Camp of St. Paul



by Bob Mitchell

There seems to be no written record of the short lived "Hendrick's Camp" of St. Paul. This opens the door to write a history of the Camp made up of rumors, questionable memories and pure fiction. This will result in a "factual" dissertation for other amateur historians to use as a guide.

J. O. Hendricks and his son Omar were the ones instrumental in building and running the camp. There is no record of either man living or going to school "in" St. Paul, although there was a "Von Hendricks," probably a son/grandson. None are numbered in the Paul Hill Cemetery. Never-the-less, the story of the Camp could not be told without them.

J. O. Hendricks lived in the Shelbyville area in the early 1920s but owned a bit of a farm on the north side of Flat Rock River between the "cave" and "shady bend." The land was in the area of Jonathon Paul's first acquisition, probably adjoining the John Walton and W. Lowe's property. Omar Hendricks, J.O.'s son, was rumored to be working the ground but much preferred dancing to farming (he was better at it too), and influenced his father to build a dance floor. The "roaring twenties" saw many communities adding entertainment centers like this one.

The structure that J.O. Hendricks built was high above Flat Rock River and contained a hard wood dance floor approximately 30 feet by 60 feet under roof. There was a picket type fence, waist high around the edge of the floor for "watchers" to stand behind. Eventually shutter type sides were added that hinged from the roof, opened by rope and pulley, and the building was usable in all kinds of weather. An entrance road was built from the bend of the St. Omer-St. Paul road, with a lane and toll entrance about half way into the grounds. Scott Hendricks, J.O.'s brother, was the gate keeper alternating with Artie Kist who also parked cars. The entrance fee was 10 cents.

The fee was frequently by-passed by most of the local youth going from St. Paul, past the Paul house, crossing Mill Creek on the dam, and wending their way up Flat Rock River past the cave and dripping springs through the woods to the back of the Hendrick's property.

"Ernie" (no last name) was the "bouncer" but seldom had time or inclination to challenge these free-loaders. Dances were held on Wednesday and Saturday nights using many visiting bands. Chet Sandman and his band from Shelbyville were frequent entertainers. The Charleston, the Shimmy, the BlackBottom and others of the era were the popular dances. It was noted that square dances were not on the card, "but there were a lot of 'square' dancers."

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These were prohibition times, and a can be suspected, some of the good times at the Camp were influenced by outside stimulates. One informant said there were some "pretty rough" crowds there at times. Another is quoted as saying, "after the '29 crash it got so bad the boot-leggers had to wear name tags and sell to each other to make a living."

The ground were used extensively for picnics, and other parties. There were built at least two houses or cabins and some campers took advantage of the wood and river for week-ends. One of the churches in town used the Camp to hold chicken fries. Horse shoe pits were popular, and vast, dark woods attracted couples who were inclined to stroll.

A boxing ring was built on the grounds, and many a prize fight was held on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. "Ernie," the bouncer, John Deglo, Billy Holland and others were good boxers and their challengers were met by many outsiders. These matches were well attended and were of professional quality, although some said there were some better, impromptu fights on Saturday nights.

The Camp thrived, after a fashion, through the 1930s and into the early 1940s.

There were probably several reasons the Camp failed to survive. By the early 1940s there were many other camps competing for the business. One, the Porter Camp, was as close as Geneva. The Second World War took many of the young people, the very age that supported the dances who kept the popular place going.

The Indianapolis Council of YMCA bought the camp grounds in 1946, but as Mr. Harvey would say, "that will be the rest of the story."

//



### Chocolate Bread Pudding

- 3 slices bread
- 2 tbsp. cocoa
- 2/3 cup hot water
- 1 pint milk
- 2 eggs
- 2/3 cup sugar
- Pinch salt
- 1 tsp. vanilla

Put bread and cocoa in a baking dish. Pour hot water over it. When softened, mash fine.

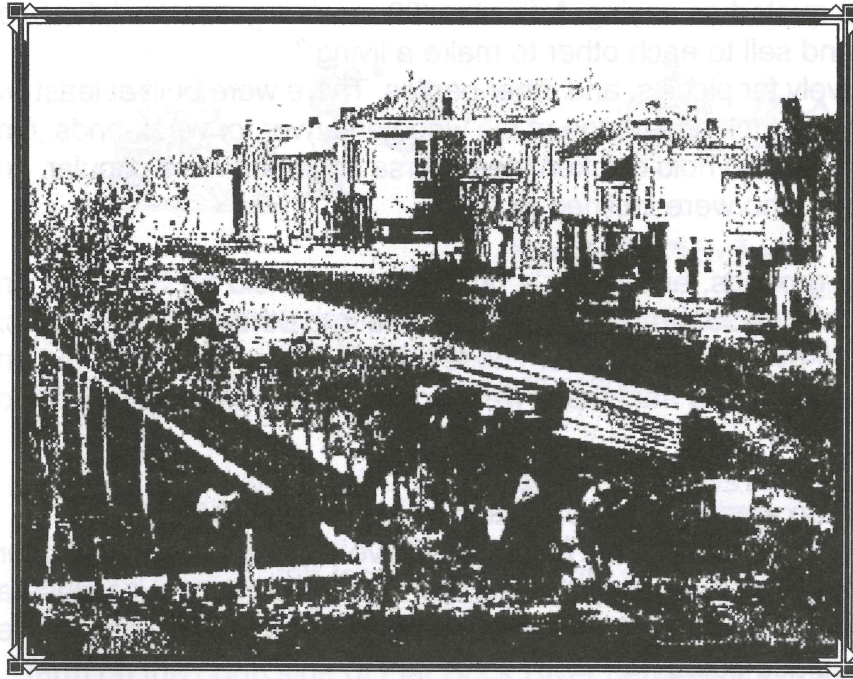
Mix milk, beaten eggs, salt, sugar and vanilla. Pour this mixture over the bread. Bake 1/2 hour in moderate oven. serve with whipped cream.

### English Sandwiches

Grate 1 stick of fine fresh horseradish or use 1/2 cup of bottled horseradish that has been drained. Pound in mortar with a gill of cream adding 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger. Work this to paste using a little whipped cream if necessary.



## **THE CHANGING SQUARE**



The photo to the left was taken at the close of the Civil War in 1865. Taken from the west looking east.



The photo above was taken of the south side of the Courthouse Square in about 1912  
Taken from the east looking west.





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It's been five years since I became editor of The Bulletin. I didn't expect to bring the experience and knowledge of former editor Van Batterton, but I knew I could count on the help of members.

And, you've been great! You've contributed suggestions, ideas, stories and material for stories. Some names will be missed but below is a list of members who have contributed since 1997. I thank them, hope they will continue, and encourage any member to contribute.

Contributors, Ruth Dorrel, Russell Wilhoit, Betty Randall, Van Batterton, Bob Mitchell, Dr. Calvin Davis, John W. Dickerson, Jack Poore, Diana Springmier, George Morgan, Jane Keith, Phillip Jackson Jr., D. Ned Linegar, Jennifer McNealy, Dr. John Gilchrist, Marceil Bostic, Margaret U. Kirk, Roger Frank Robison, M.D. Amanda Mitchell, Frances Metz, Tony Owens, Mark and Kathy Richmond, Louise Austen, Mabel M. Webb, Janet Armbrust, Melissa Cowan, Harold Stier, Roy Todd Robbins, John Ballard, Amy H. Waybright, Dale Johnson, Robert Lowell, North Decatur Elementary Little Hoosiers and Irene Krieger.

I asked for volunteers to help sort, staple, tape and label the Bulletins. Members who volunteered to help include Polly McCreary, Roy Conner, Patt Luken, Phyliss Doerflinger, Joyce Springmier, Bob Mitchell, Jean Riddell, Jennifer McNealy, Van Batterton, Russell and Nancy Wilhoit, and Kathryn Bailey. What had taken me days to complete by myself takes only a little more than an hour with the assistance of members.

In the last Bulletin I mentioned that dues were due and asked that if you didn't plan to pay your dues "would you help the Society by letting us know why..."

Several members made suggestions they thought would help or improve the society even though they did intend to pay their dues.

1. The most frequent suggestion was that we return to having four meetings per year. One meeting could be the spectacular tours Joe Westhafer has planned so well. Scheduled meetings would be the annual, spring, summer and fall meetings. Everyone who suggested this said he/she missed getting together to meet new members, have a chance to ask questions, or be entertained by interesting programs.

2. A summary of the minutes of the board meetings included in the Bulletin. The president's message in each Bulletin covers some of the actions taken by the board but to put it in writing as "Actions by the Board" would give all members a feeling of being a more active and informed member of the organization.

3. The board should include members from as many of the nine townships as possible.

After arranging your recommendations into categories I attended the December board meeting to present them to the board. I thank those who made suggestions. It's evident, from the examples above and volunteers at the museum, that we have a vital and strong Society.

Thank you for your support during the past five years. I have no doubt that with all of us working together the society will continue to grow in new directions while keeping the spirit and purpose of the organization.

Sincerely, *Pat Smith*



## Our Indiana Historical Society

You might want to consider a tour of the Indiana Historical Society this year. Guided tours are offered of the new building. Reservations aren't required if your group has 10 or more people it might be a good idea to reserve a tour in advance. You can call the staff at the Welcome Center at (317) 232-1882 or (800) IHS-1830.

### Exhibitions

#### A Working Life (now through September 2002)

This exhibition includes Marie Webster quilts, kits, patterns and personal items; Portia Sperry doll and book, family photographs, the doll "Abigail" and other items; Harry E. Wood arts and crafts furniture and coppersmithing tools; along with photographs and interactives for people of all ages.

#### William Henry Smith Memorial Library

The Society's collection of rare books, letters, diaries, business records, maps, architectural drawings, paintings, photographs, and other research material can aid in your search for Indiana history or area history. It is open to the public.

#### History Market Gift Shop

The gift store has items that have been made in Indiana or about Indiana. Selections include books, music, jewelry, art, clothing, and the Society's own publications.

#### Stardust Terrace Cafe

You can have lunch in the cafe located by the renovated historic Central Canal.

*From* George Cann's **The History of Westport, Indiana** (published December 1976)

The North Vernon, Greensburg, and Rushville Railroad which ran through Westport, Indiana, was opened to Greensburg April 15, 1880, and to Rushville on September 10, 1880.

Cora Cann Underwood, who was born September 5, 1878, laid claim to the honor of being a passenger on the first passenger train to go north on the newly-completed railroad. She was accompanied by her father, Milton Cann of Westport. In fact, the railroad cut off a small silver of land from the east edge of the Milton Cann farm.

Other routes were considered; one proposed route would have passed just to the east of downtown Westport. However, many Westport residents and businessmen, including Lewis C. Stott, were in favor of the route which was finally chosen. Mr. Stott wanted the railroad to pass between his house and barn, so that he could sit on his front porch and watch the trains go by. He offered to donate the right-of-way through his land, and the railroad officials accepted his offer. It is not known how much influence Mr. Stott actually had but the railroad did pass between his house and barn, and he did spend many hours sitting on his front porch watching the trains.



### Committee Chairs

Budget, Ruth Dorrel  
 Finance, Dan Anderson  
 Ornaments, Tony Owens  
 Publicity, Terri-Anne Blanton  
 Programming  
     Joe Westhafer, Excursions  
     Russell Wilhoit, Genealogy/Research  
     Charity Mitchell, Seminars/Presentations  
 Museum and Collections Director, Diana Springmire  
 Acquisitions, Ruth Cash  
 Displays, Ginny Garvey  
 Volunteers, Helen Hamilton  
 Maintenance, Ed Deiwert  
 Agricultural Museum, Gene McCoy

### DEADLINE DATES FOR BULLETINS

March 15, 2002  
 June 15, 2002  
 Sept. 15, 2002  
 Dec. 15, 2002

### True or False?

Ernest Vincent Wright wrote a 50,000 novel, (Gadsby, 1939) without using the letter *e*.

James Thurber wrote a story about a country in which no one was permitted to use the letter *o*.

### The Farmer's Reward

The farmer gets to buy the seed  
 To plant and fertilize.  
 Is that all he gets? No indeed  
 He gets the exercise

The farmer gets to till the land  
 To fence and modernize  
 Beside all this, I understand  
 He gets the exercise

The farmer hasn't much good will  
 Yet he must realize  
 That though he makes no money -  
 still  
 He gets the exercise.

The farmer feeds the nation  
 And contributes otherwise  
 He seldom gets vacation  
 But he gets the exercise

The farmer's always deep in debt  
 Which he can't amortize  
 This costs him lots of interest - yet  
 He gets the exercise

by Bob Mitchell

**If your dues are due please use this form to send them to the address below.**

Historical Society of Decatur County, Inc.

P.O. Box 163 Greensburg, IN 47240

Due January 1 of each year: **Membership:** single - \$10: **Couple** - \$15: **Contributing** - \$30

☐

RENEWAL

☐

NEW

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GIFT OR DONATION

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_

### MEMORIALS

IN MEMORY OF \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS \_\_\_\_\_



### **SOCIETY'S OFFICERS**

President..... Ruth Cash  
Rec. Sec.....Charity Mitchell  
Cor. Sec.....Carolyn Bean  
Membership Sec.....Rheadawn Metz  
Treas.....Dan Anderson

### **Board of Directors**

Kathryn Bailey  
Ginny Garvey  
Helen Hamilton  
Ed Deiwert  
David Miers  
Diana Springmier  
Van Batterton at large

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### **Editor of Bulletin**

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e-mail patsmith@seidata.com

### **MUSEUM DIRECTOR**

Diana Springmier  
663-2997

### **SOCIETY'S AGENT**

William H. Robbins

### **COUNTY GENEALOGISTS**

Irene Kreiger, 23184 Pocket Rd., Batesville, IN 47006

email: ikrieger@seidata.com

Russell Wilhoit, 328 N. Jackson, Greensburg, IN 47240

email: rwilhoit@hsonline.net

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF  
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P.O. BOX 163  
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Greensburg, IN 47240

Mr & Mrs Shell Smith  
518 N East  
Greensburg IN 47240,



# *The Bulletin*

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DECATUR COUNTY  
Greensburg, Indiana

Volume 7, Issue 19

August 2002

"...history is a pattern  
of timeless moments."  
- - - T.S. Eliot

## Let's Go To The Store

By George Granholt

It's been several years since, "...let's go to the store," was an invitation for a short walk or bike ride of one to five blocks with a dime or fifteen cents to sample the desirable wares of the neighborhood grocery store. Now we have to get in the car or mini-van and drive a mile or more to a huge, impersonal supermarket where it's usually not much fun to shop.

Most of the neighborhood grocery stores were family owned and operated, and seldom were non-family members employed. For this reason, the shopper would see the same people working in the store who had been there the week before. Beyond reassuring the shopper, personal friendships would develop with mutual trust the result. Just imagine telling the clerk who now scans a bar code to, "Put it on the bill. I'll settle up at the end of the week."

Each neighborhood store had its own character, and I can only relate what a fifty-year interim allows me to recall. I remember "our" grocery in Martinsville, where my family lived, as less than a block from home. The store was owned and operated by Louis Franscesconi, an Italian immigrant, his wife, and his daughter. Not surprisingly, we shortened the store's name to "Coni's Grocery."

Just outside the front stoop of the store was a large wooden box where the early route man could deposit the day's allotment of bakery products. The box once had a padlock, but at one point somebody lost the key and the padlock was removed. This didn't matter, however, since the loaves of bread and other "goodies" were seldom stolen.

Although the box provided a convenient place for a bike rider to sit and drink a nickel bottle of pop, Louie discouraged anyone to loaf there.

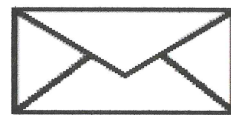
Hardly ever were more than a few customers in the store, so it was possible for one or two family members to work the meat counter, weigh the produce, and ring up the total bill on the hand-cranked National Cash Register machine. Since the groceries were then carefully placed in kraft paper sacks or a cardboard box, there was no need to leave the store with up to a dozen plastic bags. Think about it!

I also remember the mysterious "back room," always dark and musty smelling, which I would often glance into but never dare enter. I was sure strange doings went on there. The candy case was always next to the cash register for some reason known only to the proprietor, and the produce scales were on the other end of the counter, not in the produce section. The floor was hardwood, stained over many years from repeated applications of oil, and there were no shopping carts with wobbly wheels. Missing, too, was air conditioning, but screened doors, electric fans, and the friendly atmosphere more than compensated.

Well, as the saying goes, "Those days are gone forever," but in the hope of calling up some treasured memories, here is a list, gleaned from a number of sources but certainly not complete, of the neighborhood grocery stores which served the citizens of Decatur County for so many years. Check to see if your neighborhood grocery is there and take some time to reminisce.

*\*Look inside on page 2 for a partial list of local grocers from the past. Can you think of any we missed?*

## A Note from the Editor(s)



You will be seeing some changes in the upcoming editions of our Decatur County Historical Society Bulletin. The Bulletin, for several years under the very able editorship of Pat Smith, will have something of a new look both in content and format.

Everyone recognizes and appreciates the outstanding service Pat has given both the Society and Decatur County, but Pat has decided it is time to turn the editorship and the production of the Bulletin over to others. Yes, the pronoun is plural because it will now take three people to do the job previously done by one.

John Pratt and George Granholt will serve as co-editors of the Bulletin, partly because neither wants to take full responsibility for its content. A more compelling reason for two editors, however, is because Pat left such a legacy of

material and sources that one person won't be able to handle it all.

The third member of the team is Terri-Ann Blanton who will compose the Bulletin. She will be largely responsible for the format since she has the computer expertise which neither of the editors can claim. You will be relieved that the editors will not be responsible for the Bulletin's published appearance.

Of course both contributed articles and ideas for future editions of the Bulletin are welcome and will be sought. We want to do a good job for the members of the Historical Society! Our contact information is on the back page of this edition of the Bulletin.



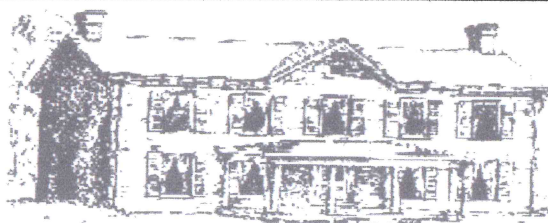
## Do You Remember these Decatur County Stores?

*\*Note: These are a few of the area grocery stores from "days gone by". Feel free to send us your additions to the list, and any anecdotes you have about your favorite neighborhood store.*

- Apple & Murphy's
- Bird's
- Clarksburg Grocery
- Collin's
- Creech's
- Davis & Kutchback's
- Downey's
- Mr. Ed's
- Gainesville Market
- Giles' (Burney)
- Golden Rule
- Hahn's
- Hall's (Adams)
- Jacobs'
- Knarr's Corner
- Austin Kutchback
- La Bolt's (Adams)
- La Mares
- Lineger's
- Little's
- Luther's (Adams)
- Mary & Betty's
- Mary Martin's
- Dewey Meyer's
- Miller's
- Milligan's
- Mobley's
- Nail's (St. Paul)
- Nelson's
- Osborn's
- Pavy's (Burney)
- Robbin's
- Ross'
- Scott's
- Small's
- Smith's (XL)
- Stories' (Dan)
- Templeton's (St. Paul)
- Toothman's (Adams)
- Wallpe's (St. Maurice)
- West End
- Wiley's
- Wodd's
- Wullenweber's



## Museum News



by  
*Diana Springmier*

drawing by John Bedel

From late spring continuing into summer, the museum offered involvement for Decatur County's youth as well as adults.

Donna Stewart's class of St. Mary's Little Hoosiers, a Junior Historical Society chapter, presented the catalogue work of some of the tools in the garage that they had been working on over the winter. Each student identified a tool and told how it was used. The catalogue and computer disc are in the archival materials of the Society. Franklin Corya and Paul Menefee guided the students in their identification.

The county's fourth graders' annual field trips involved dedicated volunteerism by many of our members. Jane Keith, Helen Hamilton, Russell Wilhoit, Pat Luken, Phyllis Doerflinger and Van Batterton guided the students through the museum. Participating were St. Mary's, Rosenmund, and Billings Elementary Schools as well as South Decatur High School's Nutrition and Foods Class. All enjoyed the "Apron Strings Tied to the Past" display. The First Baptist Church kindergarten also took a trip back into early and mid-twentieth century kitchens.

Many Decatur County ladies, members of Associate Tri Kappa, member Martha Davis' Lucky 12 Extension Homemakers Club, and numerous home economics clubs also took a trip back to kitchens of earlier days when every homemaker donned an apron for work and for entertaining, and each home had its own ice cream maker. Ruth Cash's various scoops for this cool summer dish were on display in the parlor. The Menefees' fiestaware brightened up the dining room table while Gladys Pike's collection of ceramic salt and pepper shakers and canister sets filled the surface of the four square grand in the north parlor. Member Candy Acra, wearing a red checked apron and holding a cookie sheet of warm chocolate chip cookies, was pictured in the local newspaper, standing by Faye & Marc Haston's collection of flour sifters. Ginny Garvey, who was busy unlocking the door and providing tours for all of these ladies, with her committee of Helen Hamilton and Ruth Cash, are to be commended for their efforts in planning and setting up this exhibit.

Two recent acquisitions have been donated to the museum. John and Peggy Settles, in honor of his parents, have given a 1909 Smith and Barnes player piano which is right at home in a corner of the north parlor. The staff is looking forward to sharing the early 1900's music with visitors. An Indiana kitchen cabinet, made in Elkhart in the early 1900's, has been acquired from the McDermit family. This has found a home in the service area off the kitchen. Ed Deiwert's help in moving the iron stove to make room for this piece of culinary history was appreciated!

The front lawn flower gardens are unusually colorful this summer. Kent Fenley generously provided annuals from his greenhouse, and Carol Pumphrey donated the white and red geraniums. While Carol and I were planting the gardens early one June Monday morning, many post office customers stopped by to give and ask gardening advice as well as to compliment Carol on the colorful display that has brightened up North Franklin Street. Stan Saler, with his dad's guidance, keeps the lawn mowed, and member John Stewart shows up to spray for wild onions and poison ivy.

North and South Decatur High School teenagers from the United Fund Teen Day of Caring (along with two of their teachers) scraped and painted the sideporch, pulled the ivy off the brick and out of the shutters on the front of the building, scrubbed the shutters and washed windows — all of which really shows that VOLUNTEERISM is at its best at 222 North Franklin Street.

The Museum was again a Fourth of July after-the-parade gathering spot for many generations with Decatur County ties. This year Michael Martin of Boy Scout Troop #557 presented a display of Boy Scout memorabilia through the years as part of his Eagle Scout project. Michael and his troop completed some yard chores as well as camping out in tents in the backyard the night before his opening. Member William Ford was among the donors with cases of patches and many recorded scouting memories. Troop flags and older tents were among the first floor and yard offerings.

In August, a children's program on the front lawn under the birch tree was presented each Saturday. A display of antique children's books of interest to children, parent, grandparents, and others Young at Heart was in view in the parlor.

Fall will showcase a special one-woman early 1900's fashion presentation. Select items from the pristine collection of Ruth Miers, mother of member Morgan Miers, and grandmother of David, Board Vice-President, will be on display. This donation from the Miers' family to the museum's textile collection is one the museum's staff is excited about presenting to the community.

Stop by on weekends from 1:00—4:00 p.m. or call 663-8323 or 663-2997 for group tours by appointment.

Fall exhibits will include a special one-woman early 1900's fashion show, featuring items from Ruth Miers.



# Will Cumback — A Legacy Remembered

By John Pratt

Have you ever wondered what your legacy will be after you have left this life? To be fondly remembered by friends and family, to have made this world a little better through our actions is a truly worthwhile goal for us all. Yet, there are a few who have made tremendous contributions to our community who deserve our respect...who should be remembered. Today, when we travel across the country, some of those individuals are noted through streets, parks or public buildings being named in their honor. One whose name is not on any of these is Will Cumback, and here is the story as to why that should change.

Will Cumback was born in Franklin County, Indiana, on March 24, 1829. His education included his Bachelor of Arts with Miami University at Oxford, and then his law school training came from the University of Cincinnati Law School, after which he was admitted to the bar in 1853. It was in that year that Mr. Cumback opened his law office in Greensburg, and settled down with his wife, Martha. His political involvement was immediate upon settling into the community. He was a hard-nosed Democrat until that party tried to repeal the Missouri Compromise.

Today, at the age of 25, most young men and women are just beginning to learn the ropes of their chosen professions. One involved in politics might get involved in a city or county committee. Not so for Will, as at the ripe old age of 25 he was elected to the House of Representatives in 1854.

He was the youngest elected official in Washington. Upon entering Congress, Will took an active role in the election of Nathaniel P. Banks as Speaker of the House being the first victory for anti-slave power. At this time, he developed a strong working relationship with fellow anti-slave leaders, such as Sam Houston, Witt Seward, and Horace Greeley. Yet to the dissatisfaction of many, he lost in his bid for re-election in 1856 when over 1,000 Kentuckians were put into his district.

Mr. Cumback's stay out of politics was not for long, for in 1860 he was selected as candidate for presidential elector, and he cast the first Republican vote Indiana ever gave...that going to Abraham Lincoln. In years to come, Will was to regard that as the greatest moment in his life. Exactly when the friendship began is unknown, but we do know that there was great mutual respect and admiration between Abe and Will. It was Will who arranged for President-elect Lincoln to make a brief stop en route to his inauguration on February 12, 1861, Mr. Lincoln's 52nd birthday. Mr. Cumback was on-hand to introduce Mr. Lincoln to a crowd of over 2,000 people.

The jubilation did not last long, as the Civil War soon began. Will immediately enlisted as a private, but soon afterwards he received the appointment of paymaster in the U.S. Army by President Lincoln. During the war, he was to pay out \$60,000,000, and at the end of the war his efficiency was proven when he settled his accounts in three days, and the books were balanced without a penny lost to the U.S. Government. For that, he received a brevet for faithful services by Secretary Edwin Stanton.

...there was a great mutual respect and admiration between Abe (Lincoln) and Will.

(continued on next page)



## Will Cumback ... Decatur County Statesman

Following the War in 1866, he was elected to the State Senate and was made President of the State Senate in 1867. The following year, Cumback was nominated and elected Lieutenant Governor of Indiana. After this term in office, Will proceeded to continue collecting money for the United States Government, and in 1871, he worked for twelve years as Collector of Internal Revenue.



*Will Cumback*

Will was a very active member of the great councils of American Methodism, a member of the Knights of Pythias, partly responsible for the Carnegie Public Library, and probably a resume twice as long as what has been mentioned should more of his writings be found.

I encourage you to take a look at his book "Lectures and Addresses" in the Indiana Room of our library. There he chooses some of his favorite speeches that he presented on the lecture circuit. His home was where the current Porter-Oliger-Pearson Funeral Home is, and in fact, Tom Porter has on display there Will's Lieutenant Governor's Seal. He and Martha are buried in South Park Cemetery. To get there, go through the main East Street gate, bear left at the fork and the white tombstones will soon be on your right. You can also see an original letter of his at Will Cumback Hall in the basement at Pratt Books. Even if you do nothing else, you must remember his name – it's the least anyone of us could do for the many who did so much for us.

## President's Letter by Diana Springmier

The Bulletin's co-editor's, George Granholt & John Pratt, have stepped up to the plate, attempting to fill former editor Pat Smith's shoes. The Society does appreciate all of Pat's hard work and dedication in making your Bulletin one that is an important means of communication for local and out of county members.

The Board accepted with regret the resignation of Ruth Cash, who has made numerous contributions to the Board. Her many commitments make continuing to serve the Society at this time difficult; Russell Wilhoit has been appointed to fill out her term.

New Board member Tom Barker's expertise will be instrumental in reissuing the 1937 Greensburg video. The additional vocal history and identification of those in the tape will add to the interest of this local early twentieth century history.

The museum has undergone repairs to the two porch roofs. The Society received a grant from the Decatur County Community Foundation, which partially paid for the work, which was much more extensive than anticipated. The front porch floor will be replaced soon. There is continuing upkeep at the museum — which for its age of 172 years and increased traffic is holding up quite well!

Related to the museum is news about our original 1859 two-volume set of Uncle Tom's Cabin. It will be on loan to

the Fort Wayne Lincoln Museum. The exhibit, "Gone with the Wind: Myths and Memories of the Old South," opens October 5, 2002 and runs through March 2003.

Your Society Board gave its support to the Westport Covered Bridge Renovation and Preservation Project at their fund raising kick-off in May. The bridge, constructed in 1880 of stone cut in a nearby "End Quarry" spans Sand Creek and is owned by Decatur County. It is on the National Register of Historic Places and is Decatur County's only remaining covered bridge of the ninety remaining in the state.

The bridge will be renovated at a cost of \$450,000 with a \$360,000 grant from the IN Department of Transportation, provided the county can raise \$90,000 in publicly donated funds. After the renovation, the bridge will be open to traffic, having been closed for twenty years.

The Historical Society of Decatur County's mission is to collect, preserve, research, promote and interpret the heritage of Decatur County, Indiana, thereby fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation by all of Decatur County's history, art and natural environment.

With this purpose in mind, the Board voted in May to donate \$10,000 toward this worthwhile project to preserve our rural local history.



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U.S. Postage Paid  
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Permit #80

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DECATUR COUNTY  
P.O. Box 163  
Greensburg, IN 47240

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Treasurer:	Debbie Griewe

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Tom Barker	Helen Hamilton
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# The Bulletin

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DECATUR COUNTY  
Greensburg, Indiana

Volume 7, Issue 20

November 2002

"All the world's a  
stage....."

--William Shakespeare

## Decatur County and the Arts

By George Granholt

The quality of life in communities of all sizes is determined by a number of factors, and among these is the availability of cultural offerings such as an art gallery, musicianship, and the theater. Then, too, there needs to be a group of citizens whose purpose is to plan, procure, and support the arts in a general context.

The art gallery on North Broadway offers an outstanding collection of paintings by several local artists. Excellent musicianship is evident in the many churches in the county, as well as in the popular musical programs presented by the Decatur County and Greensburg schools. The local amateur theater group, the Tree County Players, has entertained thousands of Decatur County residents and others with a wide variety of dramatic and musical offerings for many years, and the Decatur

County Arts and Cultural Council was formed to encourage support for the arts in an overall sense. Decatur County is certainly fortunate to have such a strong artistic environment.



Tree County Players original co-founder, and current State Representative Cleo Duncan starred as Dolly in the 1984 production of "Hello, Dolly!". For more about the history of TCP, see page 4.

Featured in this edition of the Bulletin, therefore, are articles written by Gloria Austin and Diane Moore who are closely associated with the Tree County Players and the Arts and Cultural Council, respectively. With permission of *The Greensburg Daily News*, we have added an article written by the late Don Austin (Gloria's father) on the K-P Theatre. The next bulletin will feature a history of the Theatre, by co-editor John Pratt. We hope you will find this edition of the Bulletin interesting and enjoyable.



## President's Letter by Diana Springmier



The Decatur County Historical Society Board's newest member, Tom Barker, is more than qualified to head the latest Society project, adding the names to the faces on the 1937 Decatur County video on the Square, a filmed treasure of those who molded our formerly rural community into what it represents 105 years later.

Eight members of DCHS member Kathryn Bailey's 1932 GHS graduating class recently held their 70th reunion and viewed the film, adding names to the list that had been compiled over the years, while recalling the time when they were in their 20's. At this reunion, the class members met with Tom Barker, who is enthusiastically spearheading this project. Tom completed his undergraduate work in IU-TV Production in 1972 and graduated from the University of Southern California Cinema Masters Program in 1974. Since 1982, he has been a video producer, working out of his Adams, IN, home. In 1990 Tom produced and directed the feature film, Deadly Discovery, in 1993 the documentary The World of Comic Books, and in 1997 the documentary of Carl Barks, the Disney Duck Artist. Tom is currently producing all the video for the IHSA and for the NRHS, the National Federation of High Schools.

The premier showing of the film will be at the February 15th Annual Society meeting. Tom will present the program, and, according to Tom, "If you have seen the old film, this new version will be a whole new experience." The video will be on sale at the dinner/meeting.

Also available by Thanksgiving will be the 2002 DCHS Christmas ornament. The 1922 Decatur County Memorial Hospital will be on this year's satin beige (outlined in hunter green) ornament. The Board voted to give these ornaments as gifts to the museum's volunteers. The ornaments will be sold at LoBill on Lincoln and Main Streets, at the local Chamber of Commerce office, and at Margaret Tremain on Lincoln Street.

Your Board recently voted to transfer \$10,000 to a newly created building fund. This future project is for much needed display and storage areas as well as office space for archival materials. A two-story carriage house on the back of the museum's property is a vision held by the Board. The second story of the museum at 222 North Franklin is bursting at the seams with gifts of Decatur County history. This project would allow the museum to continue to receive and display the heritage of Decatur County.

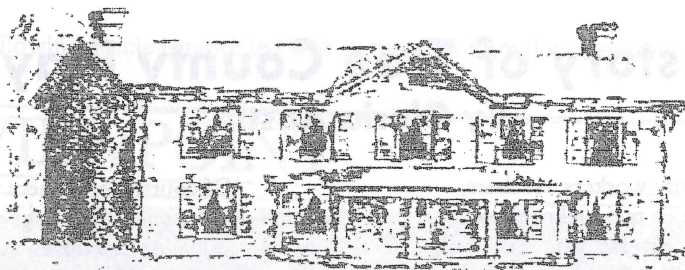
The Society, through the Board, has applied for a \$2,000 grant from the Decatur County Visitors & Recreation Commission for the printing of 10,000 two-color trifold brochures and continuing support of a distribution network that stocks the brochures at regional visitor sites on Interstate 74.

The Greensburg Fire Department has requested and been given the 1939 Dodge Fire Truck. After the department restores it as a winter project, it will be available for local parades. The Board is pleased that the truck is returning to the department and has transferred its title to the GFD. It had been given to the Society years ago when the department was off the Square and had no storage or use for it. This is the absolute best way to preserve and share the city's early 20th Century history.

Most 2002 dues have been paid. If you haven't paid yours, you will find a coupon on page 7 of this newsletter that you may use to send in your dues. Single memberships are \$10, couples are \$15 and contributing membership is \$30. **2003** dues are payable at the first of the year, or they may be paid at the Annual Meeting in February.



## Museum News



by  
**Diana Springmier**  
Museum and  
Collections Director

drawing by John Medel

The museum had an early fall display of children's favorite books throughout the years with appropriate props to accompany them. A full sized wolf in Red Riding Hood's Granny's gown greeted visitors inside the front door.

Repairs were made to the deteriorating wood porch floor in time to open for the extensive display of Ruth Miers' clothing and accessories worn when she was Grand Worthy Matron of the Order of the Eastern Star in 1938. She attended many formal functions during this time, and her wardrobe was an interesting history lesson for those who visited this exhibit and a recollection of life when dress was more formal for many who still recall those days. The North Decatur and South Decatur High School Clothing classes had field trips to view the exhibit. Also visiting during that time were members of the Bartholomew Historical Society. Delta Kappa Gamma, a Decatur County group of women educators, and Alpha Beta Sorority had their fall meetings at the museum before their tours. Ruth was the mother of past Society President Morgan Miers, and grandmother of Board Vice-President, David Miers. This exhibit will be open until Thanksgiving week-end, so you still have a little time to absorb the past while enjoying this special showing.

The Christmas season will come to the museum on the heels of Thanksgiving. Fortunately, this year Society museum volunteers have graciously offered to help Ginny Garvey and Helen Hamilton, display coordinators, decorate the first floor. Reed Schuster will showcase his expertise in the south parlor and the upstairs bedroom, as Jane and Ed Deiwert handle the garland on the stairs. Ruth Cash's

talents again will elegantly brighten the dining room in silver. Helen's antique ornaments will be displayed on the north parlor Christmas tree which she and Ginny will decorate, along with the kitchen and playroom.

Plans are in the making for the Annual Christmas Open House on December 15th from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Ruth Pike, assisted by husband Bill, will serve her mouth-watering bread pudding with warm butter sauce. Members will be called on for the baked goods that always cover the punch table. Children will be adding to the Christmas spirit, entertaining and helping serve. Chairman of our Christmas ornament committee-of-one, Tony Owens, has again volunteered daughter Taryn and her friends who had fun last year working on that holiday Sunday afternoon. Hopefully George Morgan will be on hand to demonstrate the 1909 Smith & Barnes player piano in the north parlor that he has been fine tuning. Do stop by Sunday afternoon, December 15th and share the holiday spirit with your family and friends. I assure you, you'll feel a renewal in the warmth of Christmases past on North Franklin Street.

Volunteers, remember to pick up your Christmas ornament gift under the museum's tree in December. We couldn't keep the museum open without you!

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

Mark your  
calendars for the  
Annual Meeting,  
which will be held  
on February 15th.



# A History of Tree County Players

By Gloria Austin

Politicians, lawyers, factory workers, teachers, students, doctors, even a librarian or two - all of these professions are represented in the diverse history of Tree County Players. For over thirty years, TCP has given hundreds of local people the opportunity to step outside their normal life and become characters on stage.

Local notables who have graced the local stage, both in starring and cameo roles, have been State Representative Cleo Duncan, Judge John Westhafer, and investment advisor Paul Pank.

Cleo Duncan was one of the original brainstormers who gave birth to Tree County Players in 1971. Sue Colee, Rev. Wm. Clemenson, Dr. John Himmelheber, and George Granholt were also some of the pioneers who saw the potential for civic theater in Decatur County. A formal constitution and by-laws were drawn up, and a board of directors was elected to guide the business end of the organization.

Gerald Yentes, former principal of the high school and a major theater enthusiast, designed the unique three-stage auditorium in the new high school, where Tree County Players have done their summer musicals ever since.

Yentes was a waiter in *"Hello Dolly,"* but his greatest triumph on stage was the 1983 production of *"Fiddler on the Roof,"* which he directed and starred in, even growing a beard to play Tevye. Yenta the matchmaker was a slightly less-resplendent Cleo Duncan. Tevye's wife Golde was portrayed by Alice Rust, former head librarian of the Greensburg - Decatur County Public Library.

The membership of TCP has enabled the group to accomplish goals that are out of reach for many amateur theater groups. After years of meeting in people's homes and storing flats (wall sections) at the old Knights of Pythias theater, TCP purchased a building in 1989 that is large enough for rehearsals and storage.

In 1987 the three-story Elks Lodge collapsed. TCP had performed dinner theaters in the ballroom of the Elks for several years, and the loss of that facility still has repercussions as there are few places in Greensburg with the available time and space required to mount a full dinner theater production.

Membership in TCP typically is over 100, with an additional 60 - 70 benefactors. These benefactors provide the bulk of TCP's income through tax-deductible donations. Ticket sales generally cover a portion of each show's expenses. As a not-for-profit organization, TCP is strictly volunteer. There are no paid positions, administrative or otherwise. Lack of financial compensation has not been a hindrance - people give generously of their time and talent in community theater.

Of course performers would be lost without the efforts of the tireless backstage people. Whether a cast has just two people or two dozen actors, each show requires numerous people to fill production committees such as publicity, playbill, sets, costumes, technical, make-up and props.

Unknown talent frequently appears at auditions, such as the time when "South Pacific" director Cleo Duncan called out for people interested in reading for the part of Bloody Mary. She didn't expect to see anyone remotely resembling the island native who sings *"Bali Hai,"* but out of the darkness of the auditorium appeared Naomi Stuckey, a newcomer who began a long and fruitful career in TCP with that memorable role.

Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals have been a staple for TCP, and that tradition will continue with the 2003 summer musical, *"Cinderella."* Other than a few years in the 70's when four or five shows were done per year, TCP has produced three shows each season, ending with the summer musicals in June. The overwhelming success of the recent children's shows done in the spring points to a bright future for civic theater in Greensburg.

Several people have used TCP as a springboard to professional acting. Most recently, Ben Tebbe became an Equity (union) actor in the Indianapolis area after getting a theater degree from Marian College. He was first on stage with TCP in 1984's *"Hello Dolly."*

Cleo Duncan's daughters have gone from lead roles for TCP into performance-related professions. Mary, who was the lead in *"Annie"* in 1985, is an opera singer in Boston while Vicki, who starred in 1993's *"Bye Bye Birdie,"* is an on-air reporter for WRTV in Indianapolis. Dr. Himmelheber's son, John, shortened his name to Himmel and found success with several lead roles on Broadway (New York) in the early 1980's.

Sue Ann Lee, who was a major participant in TCP for many years, now works for Disneyworld in Florida. Sue Ann was responsible, along with Mary Lou Rust, Karen (Clemenson) Hoak, Trina (Nicklas) Batterton, and Jackie Blasdel, for many of TCP's most entertaining productions through the years.

For the better part of 20 years, TCP had a repertory group known as the Tree County Singers that performed for civic clubs, reunions, parties, and events all over the state. When Indianapolis hosted the Pan - Am Games in 1987, Tree County Singers and other TCP members performed outdoors at the athlete's village. The Singers were organized by Jackie Blasdel and later directed by Sue Menefee.

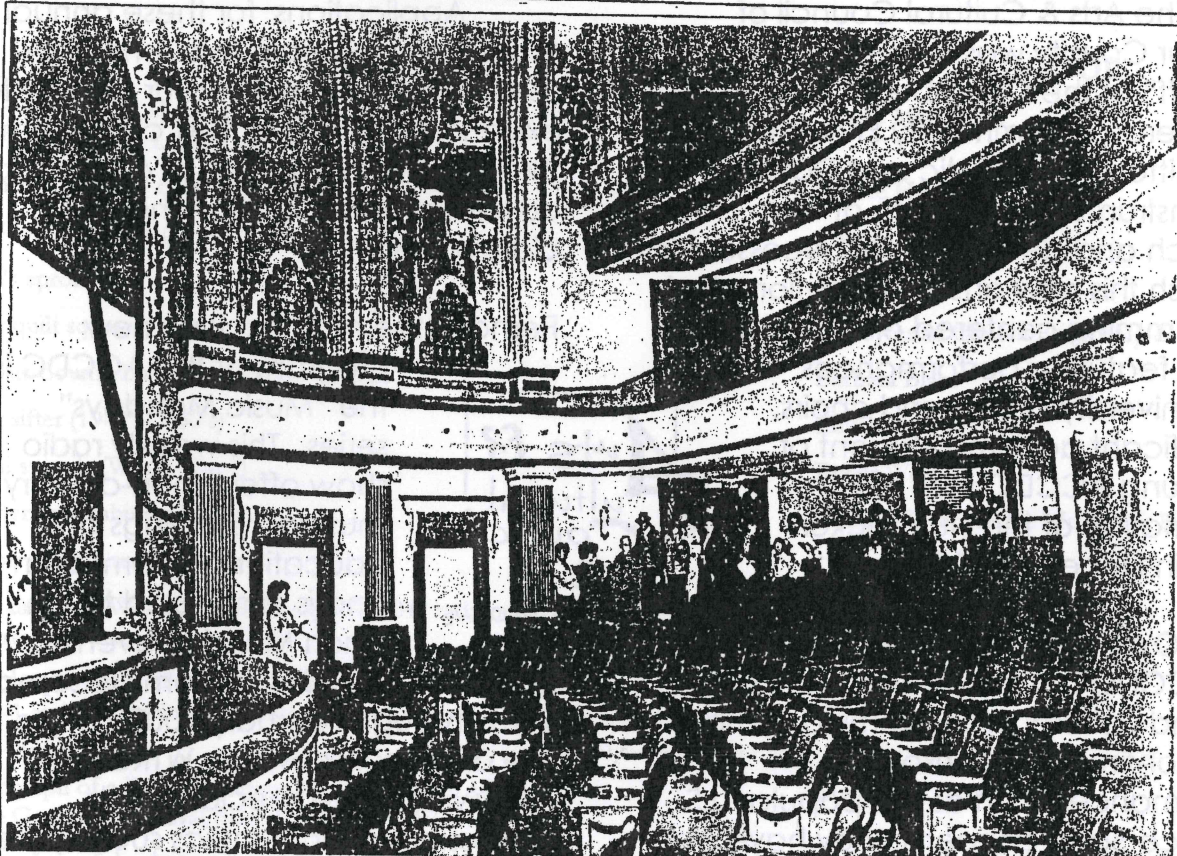
**Dim the lights and pull the curtain:  
The show must go on.**

**"Membership in Tree  
County Players typically  
is over 100, with an  
additional 60—70  
benefactors."**



The following article is reprinted with permission from the *Greensburg Daily News*.

## VIEWPOINT



Hundreds reminisced through the K of P during fund raising open house

Daily News photo by Todd Shoffelt

# Memories of the KofP silver screen

The recent public open house and conducted tours through the old K of P Theatre brought back some pleasant memories of my happy childhood, as I'm sure it did for others of my generation.

There was no television, of course, in the pre-World War II days of the '30s and early '40s so "going to the show" at the K-P was an almost weekly occurrence with many local families, mine included.

There were two shows nightly with the first starting at 7 p.m. and the second a little after nine. We (my mother, father and me) always went to the early show since only my dad usually stayed up much past 10 o'clock.

Each program consisted of, first, a newsreel — the *Movietone News* of current events around the nation and the world as narrated by Lowell Thomas — a color cartoon and a "selected short subject" feature, in addition to the full-length movie.

The admission price for adults was 35 cents for the main floor and 25 cents for the balcony. Kids under the age of 12 got in for a dime until a 10 percent excise tax was put on during the war, which raised the price to 11 cents.

Since my folks were frugal people, we always opted for the balcony. That was

Don Austin

DAILY NEWS  
COLUMNIST

okay by me — you could see just as well upstairs and the fact there wasn't any carpet on the floor like there was downstairs didn't bother me a bit.

Besides, if you got there early enough, you could sit in the front row of the balcony and put your feet up on the wooden railing, which was about two and a half feet high. My mother didn't approve of this practice, but since everyone else did it, she didn't forbid me to do it. She, however, kept her feet on the floor.

The programs were generally changed three times a week with one running Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, another Wednesday-Thursday and the third Friday-Saturday. Sometimes, when a particularly outstanding movie was being shown, it would run for five days or at most a week.

Although money was rather scarce in that depression era, near-capacity

crowds were often on hand, at least for the early show, as there was very little else in the way of entertainment in those days. There were also daily matinees at a slightly reduced price, but they never attracted too many people.

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# Arts & Cultural Council of Decatur County

By Diane Moore

The Arts & Cultural Council of Decatur County was formed in 1995 as a "spin off" of the Chamber of Commerce's Community Enrichment Committee. Bob Bostic and David Fry were instrumental in much of the research and development necessary to establish this new arts organization. Early programming centered on the "Perform Series" featuring performances from university bands and choirs. A significant accomplishment of the young ACCDC was the presentation of the Nutcracker ballet in December 1996.



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P.O. Box 163  
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Diana Springmier

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# *The Bulletin*

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DECATUR COUNTY  
Greensburg, Indiana

Volume 7, Issue 20

November 2002

"All the world's a  
stage...."  
- William Shakespeare

## **Decatur County and the Arts**

By George Granholt

The quality of life in communities of all sizes is determined by a number of factors, and among these is the availability of cultural offerings such as an art gallery, musicianship, and the theater. Then, too, there needs to be a group of citizens whose purpose is to plan, procure, and support the arts in a general context.

The art gallery on North Broadway offers an outstanding collection of paintings by several local artists. Excellent musicianship is evident in the many churches in the county, as well as in the popular musical programs presented by the Decatur County and Greensburg schools. The local amateur theater group, the Tree County Players, has entertained thousands of Decatur County residents and others with a wide variety of dramatic and musical offerings for many years, and the Decatur

County Arts and Cultural Council was formed to encourage support for the arts in an overall sense. Decatur County is certainly fortunate to have such a strong artistic environment.



Tree County Players original co-founder, and current State Representative Cleo Duncan starred as Dolly in the 1984 production of "Hello, Dolly!". For more about the history of TCP, see page 4.

Featured in this edition of the Bulletin, therefore, are articles written by Gloria Austin and Diane Moore who are closely associated with the Tree County Players and the Arts and Cultural Council, respectively. With permission of *The Greensburg Daily News*, we have added an article written by the late Don Austin (Gloria's father) on the K-P Theatre. The next bulletin will feature a history of the Theatre, by co-editor John Pratt. We hope you will find this edition of the Bulletin interesting and enjoyable.



## President's Letter by Diana Springmier



The Decatur County Historical Society Board's newest member, Tom Barker, is more than qualified to head the latest Society project, adding the names to the faces on the 1937 Decatur County video on the Square, a filmed treasure of those who molded our formerly rural community into what it represents 105 years later.

Eight members of DCHS member Kathryn Bailey's 1932 GHS graduating class recently held their 70th reunion and viewed the film, adding names to the list that had been compiled over the years, while recalling the time when they were in their 20's. At this reunion, the class members met with Tom Barker, who is enthusiastically spearheading this project. Tom completed his undergraduate work in IU-TV Production in 1972 and graduated from the University of Southern California Cinema Masters Program in 1974. Since 1982, he has been a video producer, working out of his Adams, IN, home. In 1990 Tom produced and directed the feature film, Deadly Discovery, in 1993 the documentary The World of Comic Books, and in 1997 the documentary of Carl Barks, the Disney Duck Artist. Tom is currently producing all the video for the IHSAA and for the NRHS, the National Federation of High Schools.

The premier showing of the film will be at the February 15th Annual Society meeting. Tom will present the program, and, according to Tom, "If you have seen the old film, this new version will be a whole new experience." The video will be on sale at the dinner/meeting.

Also available by Thanksgiving will be the 2002 DCHS Christmas ornament. The 1922 Decatur County Memorial Hospital will be on this year's satin beige (outlined in hunter green) ornament. The Board voted to give these ornaments as gifts to the museum's volunteers. The ornaments will be sold at LoBill on Lincoln and Main Streets, at the local Chamber of Commerce office, and at Margaret Tremain on Lincoln Street.

Your Board recently voted to transfer \$10,000 to a newly created building fund. This future project is for much needed display and storage areas as well as office space for archival materials. A two-story carriage house on the back of the museum's property is a vision held by the Board. The second story of the museum at 222 North Franklin is bursting at the seams with gifts of Decatur County history. This project would allow the museum to continue to receive and display the heritage of Decatur County.

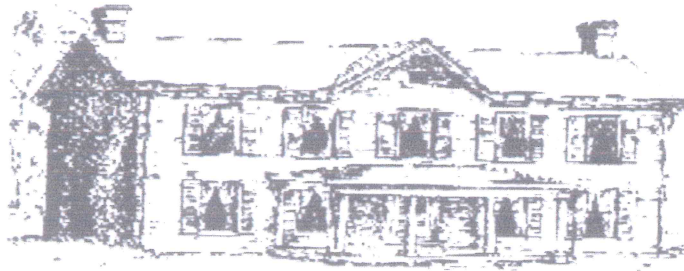
The Society, through the Board, has applied for a \$2,000 grant from the Decatur County Visitors & Recreation Commission for the printing of 10,000 two-color trifold brochures and continuing support of a distribution network that stocks the brochures at regional visitor sites on Interstate 74.

The Greensburg Fire Department has requested and been given the 1939 Dodge Fire Truck. After the department restores it as a winter project, it will be available for local parades. The Board is pleased that the truck is returning to the department and has transferred its title to the GFD. It had been given to the Society years ago when the department was off the Square and had no storage or use for it. This is the absolute best way to preserve and share the city's early 20th Century history.

Most 2002 dues have been paid. If you haven't paid yours, you will find a coupon on page 7 of this newsletter that you may use to send in your dues. Single memberships are \$10, couples are \$15 and contributing membership is \$30. **2003** dues are payable at the first of the year, or they may be paid at the Annual Meeting in February.



## Museum News



by  
**Diana Springmier**  
Museum and  
Collections Director

drawing by John Bedel

The museum had an early fall display of children's favorite books throughout the years with appropriate props to accompany them. A full sized wolf in Red Riding Hood's Granny's gown greeted visitors inside the front door.

Repairs were made to the deteriorating wood porch floor in time to open for the extensive display of Ruth Miers' clothing and accessories worn when she was Grand Worthy Matron of the Order of the Eastern Star in 1938. She attended many formal functions during this time, and her wardrobe was an interesting history lesson for those who visited this exhibit and a recollection of life when dress was more formal for many who still recall those days. The North Decatur and South Decatur High School Clothing classes had field trips to view the exhibit. Also visiting during that time were members of the Bartholomew Historical Society. Delta Kappa Gamma, a Decatur County group of women educators, and Alpha Beta Sorority had their fall meetings at the museum before their tours. Ruth was the mother of past Society President Morgan Miers, and grandmother of Board Vice-President, David Miers. This exhibit will be open until Thanksgiving week-end, so you still have a little time to absorb the past while enjoying this special showing.

The Christmas season will come to the museum on the heels of Thanksgiving. Fortunately, this year Society museum volunteers have graciously offered to help Ginny Garvey and Helen Hamilton, display coordinators, decorate the first floor. Reed Schuster will showcase his expertise in the south parlor and the upstairs bedroom, as Jane and Ed Deiwert handle the garland on the stairs. Ruth Cash's

talents again will elegantly brighten the dining room in silver. Helen's antique ornaments will be displayed on the north parlor Christmas tree which she and Ginny will decorate, along with the kitchen and playroom.

Plans are in the making for the Annual Christmas Open House on December 15th from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Ruth Pike, assisted by husband Bill, will serve her mouth-watering bread pudding with warm butter sauce. Members will be called on for the baked goods that always cover the punch table. Children will be adding to the Christmas spirit, entertaining and helping serve. Chairman of our Christmas ornament committee-of-one, Tony Owens, has again volunteered daughter Taryn and her friends who had fun last year working on that holiday Sunday afternoon. Hopefully George Morgan will be on hand to demonstrate the 1909 Smith & Barnes player piano in the north parlor that he has been fine tuning. Do stop by Sunday afternoon, December 15th and share the holiday spirit with your family and friends. I assure you, you'll feel a renewal in the warmth of Christmases past on North Franklin Street.

**Mark your  
calendars for the  
Annual Meeting,  
which will be held  
on February 15th.**

Volunteers, remember to pick up your Christmas ornament gift under the museum's tree in December. We couldn't keep the museum open without you!

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!**



# A History of Tree County Players

By Gloria Austin

Politicians, lawyers, factory workers, teachers, students, doctors, even a librarian or two - all of these professions are represented in the diverse history of Tree County Players. For over thirty years, TCP has given hundreds of local people the opportunity to step outside their normal life and become characters on stage.

Local notables who have graced the local stage, both in starring and cameo roles, have been State Representative Cleo Duncan, Judge John Westhafer, and investment advisor Paul Pank.

Cleo Duncan was one of the original brainstormers who gave birth to Tree County Players in 1971. Sue Colee, Rev. Wm. Clemenson, Dr. John Himmelheber, and George Granholt were also some of the pioneers who saw the potential for civic theater in Decatur County. A formal constitution and by-laws were drawn up, and a board of directors was elected to guide the business end of the organization.

Gerald Yentes, former principal of the high school and a major theater enthusiast, designed the unique three-stage auditorium in the new high school, where Tree County Players have done their summer musicals ever since.

Yentes was a waiter in *"Hello Dolly,"* but his greatest triumph on stage was the 1983 production of *"Fiddler on the Roof,"* which he directed and starred in, even growing a beard to play Tevye. Yenta the matchmaker was a slightly less-resplendent Cleo Duncan. Tevye's wife Golde was portrayed by Alice Rust, former head librarian of the Greensburg - Decatur County Public Library.

The membership of TCP has enabled the group to accomplish goals that are out of reach for many amateur theater groups. After years of meeting in people's homes and storing flats (wall sections) at the old Knights of Pythias theater, TCP purchased a building in 1989 that is large enough for rehearsals and storage.

In 1987 the three-story Elks Lodge collapsed. TCP had performed dinner theaters in the ballroom of the Elks for several years, and the loss of that facility still has repercussions as there are few places in Greensburg with the available time and space required to mount a full dinner theater production.

Membership in TCP typically is over 100, with an additional 60 - 70 benefactors. These benefactors provide the bulk of TCP's income through tax-deductible donations. Ticket sales generally cover a portion of each show's expenses. As a not-for-profit organization, TCP is strictly volunteer. There are no paid positions, administrative or otherwise. Lack of financial compensation has not been a hindrance - people give generously of their time and talent in community theater.

Of course performers would be lost without the efforts of the tireless backstage people. Whether a cast has just two people or two dozen actors, each show requires numerous people to fill production committees such as publicity, playbill, sets, costumes, technical, make-up and props.

Unknown talent frequently appears at auditions, such as the time when "South Pacific" director Cleo Duncan called out for people interested in reading for the part of Bloody Mary. She didn't expect to see anyone remotely resembling the island native who sings *"Bali Hai,"* but out of the darkness of the auditorium appeared Naomi Stuckey, a newcomer who began a long and fruitful career in TCP with that memorable role.

Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals have been a staple for TCP, and that tradition will continue with the 2003 summer musical, *"Cinderella."* Other than a few years in the 70's when four or five shows were done per year, TCP has produced three shows each season, ending with the summer musicals in June. The overwhelming success of the recent children's shows done in the spring points to a bright future for civic theater in Greensburg.

Several people have used TCP as a springboard to professional acting. Most recently, Ben Tebbe became an Equity (union) actor in the Indianapolis area after getting a theater degree from Marian College. He was first on stage with TCP in 1984's *"Hello Dolly."*

Cleo Duncan's daughters have gone from lead roles for TCP into performance - related professions. Mary, who was the lead in *"Annie"* in 1985, is an opera singer in Boston while Vicki, who starred in 1993's *"Bye Bye Birdie,"* is an on-air reporter for WRTV in Indianapolis. Dr. Himmelheber's son, John, shortened his name to Himmel and found success with several lead roles on Broadway (New York) in the early 1980's.

Sue Ann Lee, who was a major participant in TCP for many years, now works for Disneyworld in Florida. Sue Ann was responsible, along with Mary Lou Rust, Karen (Clemenson) Hoak, Trina (Nicklas) Batterton, and Jackie Blasdel, for many of TCP's most entertaining productions through the years.

For the better part of 20 years, TCP had a repertory group known as the Tree County Singers that performed for civic clubs, reunions, parties, and events all over the state. When Indianapolis hosted the Pan - Am Games in 1987, Tree County Singers and other TCP members performed outdoors at the athlete's village. The Singers were organized by Jackie Blasdel and later directed by Sue Menefee.

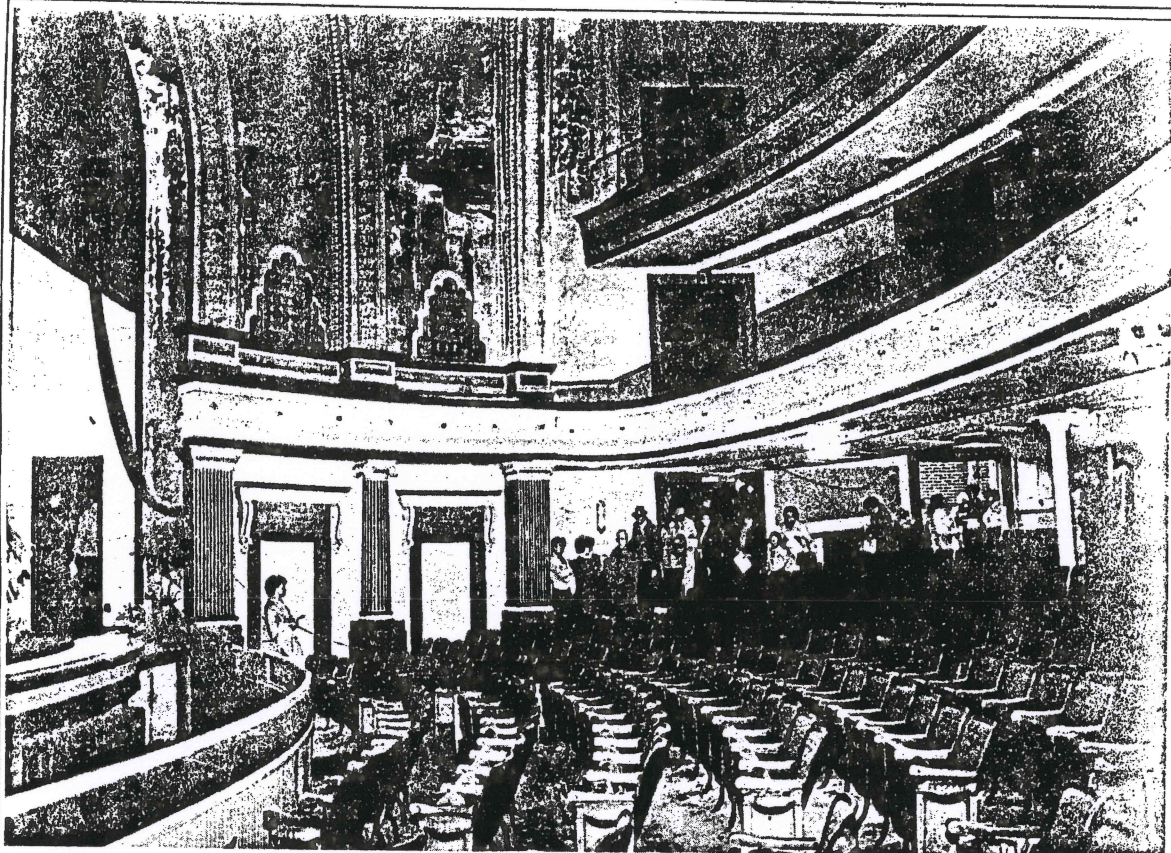
**Dim the lights and pull the curtain:  
The show must go on.**

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The following article is reprinted with permission from the *Greensburg Daily News*.

## VIEWPOINT



Hundreds reminisced through the K of P during fund raising open house

Daily News photo by Todd Shofflett

# Memories of the KofP silver screen

The recent public open house and conducted tours through the old K of P Theatre brought back some pleasant memories of my happy childhood, as I'm sure it did for others of my generation.

There was no television, of course, in the pre-World War II days of the '30s and early '40s so "going to the show" at the K-P was an almost weekly occurrence with many local families, mine included.

There were two shows nightly with the first starting at 7 p.m. and the second a little after nine. We (my mother, father and me) always went to the early show since only my dad usually stayed up much past 10 o'clock.

Each program consisted of, first, a newsreel — the Movietone News of current events around the nation and the world as narrated by Lowell Thomas — a color cartoon and a "selected short subject" feature, in addition to the full-length movie.

The admission price for adults was 35 cents for the main floor and 25 cents for the balcony. Kids under the age of 12 got in for a dime until a 10 percent excise tax was put on during the war, which raised the price to 11 cents.

Since my folks were frugal people, we always opted for the balcony. That was

Don Austin

DAILY NEWS  
COLUMNIST

okay by me — you could see just as well upstairs and the fact there wasn't any carpet on the floor like there was downstairs didn't bother me a bit.

Besides, if you got there early enough, you could sit in the front row of the balcony and put your feet up on the wooden railing, which was about two and a half feet high. My mother didn't approve of this practice, but since everyone else did it, she didn't forbid me to do it. She, however, kept her feet on the floor.

The programs were generally changed three times a week with one running Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, another Wednesday-Thursday and the third Friday-Saturday. Sometimes, when a particularly outstanding movie was being shown, it would run for five days or at most a week.

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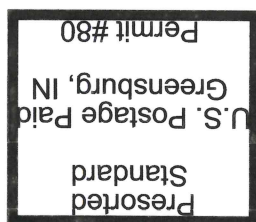
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